



SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

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SGT. JOE MILLS GRADUATES FROM PRESTIGIOUS FBI NATIONAL ACADEMY PROGRAM

Only a small number of law enforcement officials in the world are able to get into the FBI's National Academy Program in Quantico. In fact, getting into the prestigious school is often tougher than completing the 10 weeks of intense investigative, management and fitness training that are its trademarks.

"This is the most prestigious law enforcement academy that an officer can attend," says Salem Police Chief, James R. Bryant. "Only one-half of one percent of officers all around the world will ever get this opportunity."

Recently, Salem Police Sgt. Joe Mills took advantage of this rare chance and became one of just 250 officers to graduate from the 237th session of the Academy on June 12.

"I have had great mentors and supervisors my whole life who have gotten me where I am," says Sgt. Mills. "I was truly humbled by the experience, and being able to go through this process and represent my fellow-workers in the Salem Police Department was very rewarding."

Mills' application was in the FBI Academy's hands for two years before he was accepted. In order to meet the FBI's rigid standards for participation, the 6-foot 1-inch Mills had to drop 40 pounds and get his weight down to 209 to show his commitment to the program and to meet the academy's requirements.

The Salem native played three years of football for Hall of Fame Coach Willis White from 1986-1988, but he says the physical part of the academy was the toughest thing he's ever done, including White's two-a-day practices.

"They like a lot of cross-fit training that incorporates a great deal of running," says Mills. "It culminates with a fitness challenge called the 'Yellow Brick Road' where you run a 6.2 mile-long obstacle course through the woods complete with barbed wire, cargo nets and plenty of mud."

After completing that portion, Mills literally was given a yellow brick to commemorate his achievement, but he got even more out of the classroom portion of the academy where he was taught the latest investigative and management techniques.

“The classroom instruction was excellent, and I had access to the lead investigator in the JonBenet Ramsey case, who taught a class, as well as some of the individuals who were on the ground during 9-11,” says Mills.

Besides learning about cutting edge methods, Mills also picked up 18 hours of class credit at the University of Virginia, which is tied into the FBI Academy. Mills already has a Bachelor’s degree in organizational management from Bluefield College and a Master’s in criminal justice from Radford University.

“The entire experience was great, but I really believe the best part is the people you’re with during those 10 weeks,” he says. “There’s no question I’ve established relationships and friendships with officers, who I will stay in contact with the rest of my life.”

The Salem Police Department now has four individuals currently on staff who have graduated from the FBI National Academy – Chief James R. Bryant, Capt. Jeff Dudley, Lt. Tim Guthrie and Mills.

“Our philosophy is to always train someone for the next level,” says Chief Bryant. “Anytime we can get professional training like the FBI Academy and have a graduate – it’s a good day at the Salem Police Department.”

The 237th session of the FBI National Academy was comprised of law enforcement officers from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, along with 23 international countries, four military organizations and five federal civilian organizations.

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